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RUEHTA/AMEMBASSY ASTANA PRIORITY  
RUEHKB/AMEMBASSY BAKU PRIORITY 0105  
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 1019  
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI PRIORITY 5679  
RUEHYE/AMEMBASSY YEREVAN PRIORITY 0068  
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 0055  
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAHINGEN GE PRIORITY  
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
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TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [NATO](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [AF](#) [AJ](#) [GG](#)  
SUBJECT: NAC MEETING WITH AZERBAIJAN FOREIGN MINISTER  
MAMMADYAROV

Classified By: CDA W. S. Reid, III, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During his comments to the North Atlantic Council (NAC), Azerbaijan Foreign Minister Elmar Mammadyarov extolled his country's priorities of continued integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, increased practical cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners, participation in Partnership for Peace (PfP) programs, and increased contributions to regional and global aid programs. He also emphasized Azerbaijan's commitment to multiple pipelines and rail links. Allies applauded Azerbaijan's progress, but asked questions about human rights; free and fair elections; regional stability; energy security; political, economic and military reforms; transparency; and resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. End Summary.

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FM Mammadyarov makes his case  
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¶2. (C) During the September 17 meeting of the NAC, FM Elmar Mammadyarov reacted to NATO's assessment of Azerbaijan's Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), stressing that Azerbaijan's priorities, as reflected in the IPAP, were for continued integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, increased practical cooperation with Euro-Atlantic partners, PfP participation, and increased contributions to regional and global aid programs. In this IPAP cycle Azerbaijan concentrated on aspects of civil emergency planning, interoperability and public diplomacy, with Mammadyarov saying that Azerbaijan plans to continue with the reforms it has undertaken.

¶3. (C) In regards to defense reform, Mammadyarov said the Military Doctrine is almost finalized and could be adopted in the coming months, adding that Azerbaijan is adopting the NATO "J-structure" (a combined military joint force structure) throughout its military. Referring to engagement with NATO, Mammadyarov recalled President Aliyev's announcement at the Bucharest Summit that Azerbaijan intends to increase its contribution to ISAF. He also characterized as "successful" the recent visit of Azerbaijan's Deputy Foreign Minister to Afghanistan to discuss civil and military

cooperation. (NOTE: In a lunch following the NAC, Mammadyarov admitted that the delegation had actually returned from Afghanistan with more questions than answers.) Mammadyarov lauded the completion of a NATO Science for Peace project to destroy melange rocket fuel. He also noted that the third phase of a Trust Fund project to clear unexploded ordinance was about to begin, for which Azerbaijan is contributing 50 percent of the costs. Baku continues to raise awareness about NATO through centers in Baku and Ganca. The NATO International School of Azerbaijan (NISA) has established itself as a permanent institution with its own premises and staff, and Mammadyarov pledged continued support of this NGO as long as possible.

14. (C) Regarding the domestic situation, Mammadyarov said that Azerbaijan is working with the OSCE and the Council of Europe to ensure free and fair elections in October, adding that international observers would be welcomed. He stated that Azerbaijan is committed to finding a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and called on Armenian armed forces to withdraw from the conflict zone. He reiterated support for the Bucharest Summit declaration, in which nations declared respect for the principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty, although he stated that in the next summit declaration he hoped to see the words "based on these principles," rather than "taking into account these principles."

15. (C) Turning to Azerbaijan's external relations, Mammadyarov stated that Azerbaijan can make a critical contribution to regional economic growth, energy resources

and security. Azerbaijan underlined that it is committed to multiple pipelines and a rail link with Georgia and Turkey, which Mammadyarov called a "new and effective corridor between Europe and Asia." Referring to recent events in Georgia, Mammadyarov said the concept of indivisible security gives the South Caucasus region a sense of common purpose. He reaffirmed comments supporting the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia, and said that Azerbaijan is committed to providing economic assistance in the aftermath of the events of August 7. Avoiding the term "frozen conflicts," Mammadyarov instead referred to "protracted conflicts," making the distinction that these conflicts could be "reheated" at any moment. He applauded Turkey's efforts to establish a Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform, while also stressing Baku will continue to exercise its own independent foreign policy.

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The Allies respond - with praise and questions  
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16. (C) Allies thanked Azerbaijan for its contributions to NATO operations in ISAF. Resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, domestic reforms, energy security and Georgia were consistent themes in the questions Allies posed to Mammadyarov. Turkey, which serves as Contact Point Embassy for Azerbaijan, declared that it has witnessed consistent reform in the country over the last ten years, has seen positive indications of Baku's commitment to fulfilling its remaining IPAP obligations, and thanked Azerbaijan for always being "at the forefront" of the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council. Turkey also announced a donation of USD 150,000 to the PFP Trust Fund to clear unexploded ordinance. It commended Azerbaijan for its goal of "looking for a lasting and peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict within the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Azerbaijan."

17. (C) Ambassador Volker spoke of the challenges of changing borders by force, and the opportunities for greater Azerbaijani engagement with Turkey and Armenia. He also encouraged Azerbaijan to embrace the Minsk Group process further. He stated the need for Baku to continue political and economic reforms, cooperate with the OSCE, media and civic society, and complete the Military Doctrine. The UK and Norway asked for an update on human rights, freedom of

the media, and electoral law reform. The Belgian PermRep hoped that "regular and productive" elections would indicate a "step towards NATO." Italy said that the elections would be a test of the strength of Azerbaijan's IPAP and the country's evolution, and expressed its hope to develop joint projects in energy security. The Dutch PermRep raised the subject of the Nabucco pipeline and the alleged persecution of journalists. German PermRep Brandenburg called for Azerbaijan to implement more democratic control of the armed forces.

¶8. (C) Noting that as he was departing Tbilisi he passed a long line of AzOil tankers, the UK PermRep stressed the importance of cooperation among the states of the Caucasus. Norway commended Azerbaijan's "constructive approach in support of Georgia." The German PermRep called Russia "part of the problem" but also "part of any potential solution," and stated that the EU made the right decision including Azerbaijan in the EU Neighborhood Program. The Czech PermRep explained that the NATO-Georgia Commission was meant to strengthen ties with Georgia, and should not be interpreted as "MAP-minus." He also raised questions about the development of the CIS in light of Georgia's withdrawal from the group. Broadening the focus of questions from Georgia to the entire region, Poland said that Gori shows the horrors of unilateral change in borders and asked Mammadyarov to evaluate circumstances in Iran. Bulgaria asked what else Azerbaijan can contribute to ISAF.

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Mammadyarov's rebuttal ... and questions left unanswered  
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¶9. (C) Mammadyarov responded that the South Caucasus region "sat on a new page" after the Georgia conflict. He said that Baku wants everyone to "calm down" and "let the diplomacy work," and made the allusion that it is better to have "banks than tanks" in the region. He stated it was still too early to predict what the impact of Georgia's withdrawal from the CIS would be. He also said that it is up to CSTO member states to determine their aspirations and address their own security situation. Mammadyarov reported that Iran's Foreign Minister recently visited Baku, arguing that even Iran was not immune from the Georgia crisis. Turning to energy matters, Mammadyarov said the shutting down of the pipeline in Turkey during the Georgia conflict illustrated the need for greater energy security. Regarding Nabucco, Mammadyarov said that there are two approaches - one which he argued should be based on commercial viability and which he now contended was "too politicized," and the other which needs to look at how to bring more Azeri gas to Europe. Regarding Afghanistan, he said Azerbaijan is focused on providing civilian assistance because of common religious understanding with the Afghan people.

¶10. (C) On domestic policies, Mammadyarov stated that the World Bank ranked Azerbaijan 33rd on its list of reformers and it is concentrating on building a free market economy, reducing dependence on oil and gas revenues, privatizing land, and transforming its infrastructure. Mammadyarov spoke of his dream that he can one day take his family on a 3-day continuous rail trip from Azerbaijan to Disneyland Paris. He also said that Azerbaijan is working to strengthen civil society, rule of law, and investing in education. He committed that "we will try to do all our best" to ensure free and fair elections in October. Mammadyarov mentioned that Tony Blair recently applauded Azerbaijan for its transparency.

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